DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 032 203 RE 001 868

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The Preparation of Reading Teachers.

Pub Date May 69

Note-6p.; Paper presented at the International Reading Association conference, Kansas City, Mo., Apr. 30-May 2, 1969.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.40

Descriptors-Elementary Grades, Evaluation, *Methods Courses, *Preservice Education, Program Administration, Reading Diagnosis, *Reading Instruction, Remedial Reading, *Teacher Education, Teaching Methods

Difficulties encountered and insights gained while designing, implementing, and evaluating a preservice reading methods course at the University of Minnesota are presented. An analogy is drawn between the university teacher training program and the elementary school reading program. Both are seen to include planning, teaching, evaluating, and reteaching. Large group lectures, small group seminars, and actual classroom teaching experience make up the methods course. Background information, theory, and technical knowledge are presented in the lectures. Seminars involve discussions of significant issues encountered in lectures and assigned readings and of problems arising in the classroom. Instruction, diagnosis, and remediation are the major elements that form the core around which the classroom experience is designed. Emphasis is placed on the cooperation of the methods teacher and public school personnel in planning, executing, and evaluating the methods program. (RT)

ED032203

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The Preparation of Reading Teachers

Session: New Approaches to Teacher Education

A Paper Presented to the International
Reading Association, Kansas City, May, 1969

During a recent in-service meeting, the writer met a young second grade teacher who was experiencing great difficulty in teaching reading. She admitted that oftentimes she would avoid teaching reading entirely, because she was so unsure of what to do. At her best, she would prepare lessons from three teacher's manuals for each of her reading groups. Even then, she was uncertain of procedures, techniques, and whether she was accomplishing anything. This teacher is not alone in her quandary. In a recent conversation with a helping teacher, the writer was told of a beginning third grade teacher who was in tears about her inability to teach reading. She did not have the remotest idea of where to begin. She had done well academically in her college methods courses, but really did not know what to do when confronted with children in the reading circle.

For the last two years, the writer has had the opportunity to develop a reading methods course at the University of Minnesota, where this kind of problem was taken into consideration. Developing a course of this nature was frustrating at times, amusing at times, most gratifying and seemingly, successful. The writer would like to share some of the difficulties encountered and insights gained while designing, implementing, and evaluating this program. When planning the course initially, it appeared that the university teacher training program and the elementary school reading program were somewhat analogous. Both should include planning, teaching, evaluating, and reteaching.

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Designing a course of this nature required planning of a special type. The writer tried to take several important things into consideration. First, the course had to be constructed within the existing university course framework. No

wholesale changes demanding faculty committee approval were required, nor were extra funds or special equipment necessary. Second, and exceedingly important, the program was cooperatively developed by the writer and the classroom teachers of the public school involved.* It is felt that too often university sponsored programs are foisted upon public schools, with little or no cooperation in the planning, execution, and evaluation of such programs. Part of this difficulty is the dichotomy which often exists between university professors and public school personnel. The result is lack of communication. Third, the university students' learning process had to be taken into consideration. This was done by involving the university students in one weekly large group lecture, one weekly seminar made up of eight to twelve students, and perhaps most crucial of all, was the time spent in the elementary school.

Lectures. During the weekly large group lecture, the instructor attempted to present students with background information, theory, and technical knowledge deemed essential for effective reading instruction. This part of the course did not differ markedly from most other reading methods courses. However, lectures needed to remain highly practical in order for students to be able to apply what was learned to their classroom assignment.

Seminars. Students also met weekly in small group seminars to discuss significant issues encountered in lectures, assigned readings, and mostly, problems arising in the classroom to which they are assigned. Questions raised by students regarding their classroom experiences were insightful and numerous. They frequently dealt with the following areas: gaining and maintaining childrens' attention and interest, timing and pacing of the various parts of the lesson, methods of vocabulary presentation, obtaining maximum participation from the children, providing for within-group ability differences, preparation of teacher-made material, and conducting on-the-spot remediation lessons. Another frequent difficulty students have is control.

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While maintainence of discipline is not of major concern in the course, it is felt that a teacher of reading must have some degree of control in order for any lesson to be effective. Emphasis is also given in seminars to familiarizing students with a variety of reading materials and specific methods and techniques of instruction. In addition, there is a general sharing of ideas gained from classroom experiences.

Classroom Involvement. Perhaps the most crucial part of the course is that students are required to spend one hour per week in an elementary school teaching reading to a small group of children under the direct supervision of both the university instructor and the classroom teacher. Through lectures and seminars, students are provided with sufficient background information to begin teaching reading lessons. They then see a demonstration by the classroom teacher to whom they are assigned. They are made aware of the children with whom they will be working the following week, what teacher's manual they will need, and the materials available to them. Students are reminded that they will be functioning as teachers and informed of their consequent responsibilities. Children with any special learning disabilities, behavior disorders, or physical handicpas which impede their learning are brought to the attention of the university students.

During the second week, the university students begin working with their assigned children. These groups are generally the same reading groups the classroom teacher has devised for regular reading instruction. Two major elements form the core around which the classroom experience is designed: (1) teaching a selection; and (2) diagnosis and remediation. During a quarter's time, students are instructed to give particular emphasis to the various parts of teaching a selection. One week he might stress vocabulary presentation, the next week he would work especially on building readiness, and a third week dwell mostly on developing questioning techniques. While the teaching of a selection revolves primarily around the basal approach, attention is also given to innovative techniques and materials. These

include linguistic, individualized, and language experience approaches. Once students have gained some competence and confidence in the above phase, they then go on to work with one or two children experiencing difficulty in reading. They administer informal tests and proceed to construct remediation lessons for these children under the direct supervision of the university instructor.

Students are evaluated not as teachers or student teachers, but as beginners who may make mistakes. They receive immediate feedback following their lessons from both the university instructor and the classroom teacher. They may receive additional feedback, either through individual attention or in seminars, where common problems are discussed.

Planning, Teaching, Evaluating, and Reteaching. As mentioned earlier, the university teacher training program and the elementary school reading program seem to have certain commonalities. Despite university students denial, this writer notes much similarity in teaching a six year old to read and teaching a twenty year old to teach reading. The planning phase of the program was intensive on the instructor's part, both in designing the program, and in setting it up each quarter for a new group of students. Each classroom teacher involved in the program also engages in a great deal of planning. He must provide university students with needed background information regarding his class. Moreover, he must estimate how much of the basal reader he will cover during a week's time, in order to give the university student an assigned story to teach. Likewise, the university student must plan. He is required to turn in to his classroom teacher a thorough lesson plan on the day he teaches. He also turns in a copy of that plan plus an evaluation to the university instructor following his lesson.

The teaching phase of the analogy is equally important for the university instructor, classroom teacher, and university student. In the elementary classroom, of course, teaching needs to be vital. The university instructor also must make the methods course relevant to students' needs. The classroom teacher gives a

demonstration reading lesson with his children as well as assisting the university instructor in preparing his reading teachers. It has already been pointed out what teaching responsibilities the university student has.

The third phase of the analogy, that of evaluation, is also crucial for the university instructor, classroom teacher, and university student. The role of the university instructor and classroom teacher in the evaluation of student lessons has been discussed at length and cannot be overemphasized. In addition, though, the university student engages in self-evaluation. It is felt that a highly desirable quality for a teacher is an ability to analyze one's own shortcomings, and rectify any deficiencies. Emphasis, therefore, is given to developing this skill. Within the evaluation of their lesson plan, students include remarks on parts of their lesson which went extremely well and areas in which they felt particularly weak. Moreover, students comment on how they could have been better prepared by the university instructor to teach that particular reading lesson. This assists the university instructor in the evaluation of his own teaching.

Finally, as a result of evaluation, there may be a need to reteach. For the university student, this may mean modifying certain techniques or adjusting the lesson to meet the needs of his children. It may also mean going back and reteaching a reading skill to a child who was unable to grasp it the first time. For the university instructor, evaluation might indicate that one of his students needs assistance in one or more areas of teaching a selection or in diagnostic and remedial procedures. It might also indicate a need to modify the course as a whole, so that certain portions are deleted and appropriate additions made for the next quarter.

Summary and Conclusions. The previously described pre-service reading methods course provides the opportunity for immediate relevancy. The gap between traditional lecture-only methods courses, the student teaching experience, and the quality of reading instruction offered by the beginning reading teacher is considerably lessened. Moreover, classroom involvement aids in clarifying meanings, aids in retention, stimulates critical thinking, and aids in developing initiative and planning.

The program, in addition to being advantageous in teacher preparation, offers benefits for the elementary students taking part in the program. They are able to relate to a number of different adults, who are usually extremely well prepared, vibrant, and eager to learn. Furthermore, students are not instructed out of the context of their regular, systematic sequence of skill development.

In order for such a program to meet with success, the following appear to be prerequisite: (1) extensive planning, cooperation, and evaluation by the university instructor, public school administrator, and classroom teachers; (2) direct supervision by the university instructor and classroom teachers; (3) university students who are willing to invest much time and preparation; (4) willingness on the part of the university instructor to devote much time and attention to both supervision of instruction and handling of seminars; (5) course content which is exceedingly practical; (6) availability of needed teachers' manuals and other material; (7) and finally, what teaching reading is all about, children! One cannot help but speculate whether such a program would have had an impact on the uncertain and tearful beginning reading teachers discussed in the introduction of this paper.